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THE GIRDLETON GALLERY MYSTERY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'MR MAGSDALE'S COURTSHIP,' 'MRS LAMSHED'S WILL,' &c.

CHAPTER I.

FIVE thousand pounds reward! Whereas some person or persons unknown did between the hours of 5 P.M. on Saturday, 2d May, and 9 A.M. on Monday, 4th *idem*, with knives or other sharp instruments maliciously cut from the picture, by Raphael Sanzio, known as "The Journey of Tobit," the property of Andrew Girdleton, and exhibited by him in his Gallery of Fine Arts, No. 909A New Bond Street, a portion of said picture measuring fifteen inches by nine inches, or thereabout, whereon is portrayed a dog'—

'Could you say what breed or variety of dog it was?' Mr Lee Boughton paused in his work of drafting the advertisement to ask the question of his client.

'No,' replied Mr Girdleton, 'I never saw a dog quite like it. I expect the breed's extinct.'

'Well, well, perhaps the point is not important,' said his solicitor half grudgingly; for Mr Lee Boughton had been a dog-fancier before he was articled, and was still a shining light on matters relative to the Irish terrier at meetings of the Kennel Club. 'Perhaps the point isn't vital. Let's see,' glancing back to the paper before him; 'where was I?'

'Portrayed a dog,' suggested Mr Girdleton gloomily; 'also a left foot shod with a brown sandal of antique pattern.'

'Yes,' said Mr Lee Boughton, writing, 'and have stolen and carried away that portion of the picture known as'—

'Is it necessary to have that over again?'

'It is advisable to put it in due legal form.'

'I was thinking of the expense of the advertisement,' sighed Mr Girdleton; 'but go on.'

'Think of the stake at issue, sir!' suggested his solicitor reprovingly. 'As I understand it, the intrinsic value of the work is fifty thousand pounds sterling, and the mutilation renders it'

'Worth fifty shillings; but pray don't let me hinder you; I must get back to Bond Street.'

Mr Lee Boughton took the hint, grasped his pen again, and hurriedly scribbled off the rest of the advertisement; which was to the effect that the aforesaid sum of five thousand pounds would be paid to any one who discovered, or gave such information as should lead to the discovery and conviction of the malefactor who perpetrated the outrage. Application to be made to Lee Boughton & Phipps, 125 Lincoln's Inn Fields.

'That will do, I think,' he said, after reading aloud what he had written. 'Now, we are to send this for insertion in a prominent place to all the papers on your list.—Why, bless me, Mr Girdleton, you have forgotten to put the *Collegian* on your list of weeklies. Surely'

'No, I didn't forget it,' said the great dealer grimly; 'the *Collegian* gets none of my money. It was the *Collegian* that tried to cast doubt on the authenticity of the Raphael, questioned the genuineness of the work, and said I'd been imposed upon, if you please!'

'There must have been some personal feeling,' said the solicitor soothingly; 'either that, or it was a disgraceful attempt to make sensational reading at your expense.'

'It was personal animus, I believe,' said Mr Girdleton, rising and drawing on his glove. 'It was once my painful duty to tell Trotter, who does the Old Masters for the *Collegian*, that he was an impostor. That man Trotter, sir, poses

as an authority on every painter contemporary with and prior to Sir Joshua Reynolds.'

'Obviously a charlatan,' said the tactful Mr Lee Boughton. 'Well, this advertisement will sufficiently prove your faith in the genuineness of the work.'

'If paying fifty thousand down in hard cash hasn't proved it,' said the dealer bitterly. 'As if a man of my age and experience were likely to let himself be taken in with a spurious Raphael at that figure.'

'The thing's absurd,' smiled Mr Lee Boughton, tactful and soothing as ever.

'I must go; we shall be pestered to death by the newspaper people for the next week, and I mustn't be away from the place.'

The newspaper people had already begun to pester when Mr Girdleton reached Bond Street. Either the vulture-like instinct which is the gift of all journalists had brought them, or it might have been a type-written circular. Mr Girdleton resigned himself to the ordeal of examination with the best grace in the world. Several brethren of the pencil were present, industriously discussing the sherry and sandwiches which for their delectation replaced the office books on the large side-table in Mr Girdleton's private room.

'Sent for the police yet?' inquired the representative of the *Moon*, after greetings had been exchanged.

Mr Girdleton had sent for a detective. 'Not,' he added, sighing softly, 'that I feel much confidence in the ability of the Scotland Yard people to help me. In such a case, I feel that real aid must come from the Press.'

The youngest reporter dropped his wine-glass in the convulsive snatch he made at an enormous note-book in his breast-pocket; he was new to the business.

'Don't apologise, sir,' cooed Mr Girdleton, pouring out another glass of wine for the abashed youth. 'Mr Waters,' to him of the *Comet*, 'a glass of Madeira before we go into the gallery? I know your time is precious, gentlemen; but if you will join me at lunch, after we have inspected the picture, I shall be able to give you all the information I can without trespassing too much upon your patience.'

The journalists accepted like one man. It is said that if a member of the Institute of Journalists attend any function of whatsoever description whereat refreshments are served, and knowingly refrain from partaking thereof, he is liable to summary expulsion from the Institute. It is not on record that any member has yet been expelled for this offence.

The red rope which ran round the gallery to keep visitors at a respectful distance from the treasures of art upon the walls had, in front of the mutilated Raphael, been carried well out in a semicircle to facilitate inspection, and two policemen stood within the space making heroic endeavours to look important; as grooms might look if set to guard the stable whence the horse has been stolen. Mr Girdleton stepped within the red ropes, beckoned the reporters to follow him, and led the way round to the top of the room, where an increasing throng of shilling visitors was gathered.

'There, gentlemen!' He waved his hand at the picture and blew his nose at the public.

'Girdleton—Mr Girdleton—Mr Andrew Girdleton himself,' murmured the crowd. And ejaculations of 'shameful!' 'wicked!' 'disgraceful!' grew louder and more sympathetic.

The spectacle presented by the famous picture justified the strongest expressions. The central figure was intact save for the left leg, which, cut off above the ankle, seemed pointing mutely to the unsightly gap which yawned against the wooden backing. Mr Waters examined the canvas closely; it had been cut clean, and the absence of ripple or other sign of strain proved that the instrument used had been a sharp one and deftly handled.

'I have instructed my solicitors,' said Mr Girdleton, addressing his patrons outside the rope, 'to offer a reward of five thousand pounds for discovery of the miscreant who did this. I shall spare no effort to bring him to justice.' Then as people began to press forward to express their condolences, he bowed and hastened back to the privacy of his own room, followed by the journalists. Lunch was ready on the side-table, and while his guests ate, Mr Girdleton unfolded his tale, premising that what he could tell would, he feared, throw little light upon the mystery. Last Saturday afternoon at five o'clock the picture was sound; this morning at nine it presented the deplorable aspect they had seen. Two reporters noted 'deplorable aspect,' and Mr Girdleton continued. He was absolutely at a loss to imagine how the scoundrelly vandal (only the youngest reporter noted this) had obtained admission to the gallery.

A watchman slept on the premises, and was relieved at eight on Sunday morning by another, who, in his turn, was relieved by the night watchman at eight in the evening. The street door of the gallery—the only entrance—could be opened from the inside, but not from the outside. This arrangement compelled the watchman to remain on the premises, as if he went out and the door closed, he was shut out until Mr Girdleton himself came and opened the door with his master-key. The night watchman could not say whether the picture was all right or not when he went off duty on Sunday morning; nothing had occurred to disturb him during the night, and he did not think of looking. The Sunday man, however, averred that shortly before he was relieved he happened to glance through the glass doors which separated the gallery from the hall, and thought he saw something odd about the picture. The blinds being drawn over the skylights, and the Raphael occupying the place of honour at the top of the room, the man would not be able to see it distinctly. The night porter asserted that he was not disturbed on Sunday night; he admitted the woman whose duty it was to sweep and dust the gallery and offices at eight this morning, and she was the first to discover the mischief. 'And now, gentlemen,' concluded Mr Girdleton, 'you know as much as I do.'

'You have formed no theory of your own about the business?' queried Mr Smart of the *Daily Argus*. 'You don't suspect any one belonging to the place?'

'No. I don't suspect anybody. Welks and

Jackson, the two watchmen, are not likely to have done such a thing. I don't suspect either of them, but as one or other must have been guilty of very grave neglect, I dismissed them summarily this morning, promising, of course, that I would take back the man whom events proved was not in fault.'

'Your own key is the only means of opening the door from the outside?' said the youngest reporter.

'The sole means, and is never for a moment out of my possession.'

'And there is no other possible means of entrance?'

'None, unless we assume that the person came through the skylight with a ladder,' replied Mr. Girdleton with a forlorn smile.

'Your clerks are above suspicion?' hazarded Waters, turning a fresh leaf in his notebook.

'The only member of my staff between whom and myself any little difference of opinion has arisen lately, and who, therefore, might have motive for injuring me, is beyond suspicion if only because he was away from town from noon on Saturday till ten this morning. He went down to Staines to spend the week-end with his mother.'

Waters emitted a half-suppressed grunt of recognition.

'You will have a rare show for the next week,' remarked Smart, as he rose and took his hat. 'It seems to have begun.' The gallery hall, indeed, was filled with people crowding to the turnstiles, whose continuous clack betrayed streams of shillings.

'Bad news travels fast,' sighed Mr. Girdleton. 'It will be a nine days' wonder, I suppose, but it would need a longer boom than we are likely to have to make up a tenth part of my loss.'

'I am afraid so; but we'll hope the offer of a reward will produce results. Good-bye for the present.'

'What do you make of the affair?' inquired he of the *Daily Argus* of Waters, when, having writhed their way out, they found themselves in Bond Street.

'Special edition and three cols. long primer,' replied Waters, 'nothing less.'

'No, no! I believe you'd bleed printer's ink if I pricked you. I mean what opinion have you formed as to this picture-cutting?'

'Pardon; I didn't follow you. Oh, I don't know what to surmise. One of the watchmen might have done it on the chance of a reward being offered, or Eltham might have done it out of spite.'

'Who is Eltham? I don't know the place as well as you do.'

'Eltham is Girdleton's cashier. It was he who went down to spend Sunday at Staines.'

'Well; go on.'

'Mind, Smart, I'm speaking in confidence now. I myself shan't use what I am telling you, and you must promise not to.'

'Certainly, I promise. Then Eltham is the man with whom Girdleton has lately had a difference of opinion?'

'Yes; Girdleton used to ask Eltham, who is of better social position than the others there,

frequently to his house—where I may remark you get a rattling good dinner—and Eltham lost his heart to Miss Girdleton. That would not have mattered, but Miss Annie lost hers to him; and the upshot of it was they went a couple of weeks ago hand in hand to papa for his blessing. Papa laughed at them and told Eltham he ought to know better.'

'Naturally, Eltham didn't take it well.'

'He gave notice to leave; but Girdleton, who is really a very kindly fellow, talked to him like a father; pointed out that Miss Annie was not eighteen, that Eltham was only two-and-twenty, and three pounds a week was not an income on which a young man ought to marry. He didn't tell him (as he did me) that he had higher views for his daughter. And Eltham was induced to remain on. But the portals of his paradise at St John's Wood are closed against him for the time.'

'I hardly think there's ground for suspicion in that "difference of opinion,"' observed Smart, ruminating; 'it's not as if Girdleton had treated him harshly.'

'I don't suspect Eltham, mind. But I'm inclined to think Eltham hasn't forgiven Girdleton's good-natured contempt of his pretensions. He told me himself that had it not been for the fact that his mother was partially dependent on him he should have thrown up his berth.'

They were passing the National Gallery, both lost in silent speculation, when Smart abruptly stopped and said he was going back to ask Eltham a question or two.

'Ah! Think of having a shy at that five thousand pounds yourself?' laughed Waters.

'Not exactly. It's only in novels that the amateur detective solves the mystery. I want to get hold of those two watchmen, for it seems to me altogether too extraordinary that neither of them should have been disturbed.'

'Well, I wish you luck. I must go on and evolve a theory out of my own inner consciousness; it's past two, and it will take me all my time to get my stuff out.' Thus disrespectfully did Mr. Waters speak of those three columns of large type, wherewith the great British public was to be thrilled in a special edition of that evening's *Comet*.

Robert Smart, enjoying the greater freedom of a writer on a morning paper, had more time to investigate. He went back to Bond Street, and met Richard Eltham just as he came in from his afternoon visit to the bank, whither he had been with a heavy load of silver. The cashier was a sturdily built young man with a pleasant open face, who received Smart cordially enough when he introduced himself.

'It's the busiest afternoon we have ever had,' he observed, 'but nothing to what I expect it will be when the papers have ventilated the business. I am awfully busy, as we are going to remain open till seven instead of six, but I can give you ten minutes.'

'I wanted to ask if you would feel at liberty to tell me the addresses of the two watchmen who were dismissed,' said Smart, a little awkwardly.

'Why do you want to see them?' inquired Eltham pointedly, his manner changing.

'Copy,' replied Smart with a shrug.

'Neither could tell you more than he told us.'

'Mr Girdleton did not say very plainly what they did tell you.'

'I was not present when he questioned them ; he had them before him in his own room ; but practically it amounted to this : neither man had been disturbed.'

'I understand that you would rather not put me in the way of questioning them,' said Smart, after a little more adroit fencing on Eltham's part.

'I'd rather not do so without referring to Mr Girdleton, and he is out at present.'

'Very well, forgive my curiosity ; but it's my business to be curious, you know.'

'Quite so,' returned Richard Eltham graciously ; 'and you will understand that I can't let my tongue wag in a matter of this kind.'

Smart said he appreciated the position and took his leave somewhat chagrined. No self-respecting writer on the staff of a journal like the *Daily Argus* likes to give an account of so remarkable an incident, without putting forward a theory of some kind, and so far he was at a loss to think of anything plausible enough to be worth print. He was sorry now that he had gone to see Eltham. The young man's demeanour had impressed him so favourably that his sense of justice recoiled from the idea of doing what he had contemplated ; which was to point out that ill feeling existed towards Mr Girdleton on the part of an employee who was said to have spent the thirty-six possible hours at Staines ; that there were large facilities in the way of late Sunday trains for running up to town from that riverside resort ; and that the movements of that employee had not been satisfactorily accounted for.

'I can't do it now,' thought Smart ; 'it would be too mean, after trying to pump him. He has character that young Eltham ; he is loyal at all events.'

Richard Eltham had been loyal, and would have been so, had the extent of his information afforded opportunity of disloyalty. But even had his sense of duty to his employer not imposed silence upon him, he had another strong motive for refusing to disclose the addresses of the two watchmen to earnest inquirers after truth. He had, in fact, early in the day conceived the idea of trying to probe to the bottom of the mystery himself. The more he thought about it, the more strongly he felt that this was his opportunity. Mr Girdleton had—and he grew hot all over as he remembered it—treated him like a silly schoolboy, and had laughed at his pretensions. Well, supposing that he set to work, and of his own perseverance and acumen traced the person who had mutilated the famous Raphael and brought him triumphantly to justice, his employer's opinion of him would—must—undergo a change. The reward was not of so much account, though properly invested it would make a handsome provision for his widowed mother and relieve him of a heavy responsibility. The particular result of success which presented itself in most attractive colours was

his restoration to Mr Girdleton's private circle, with possibilities to follow of too deliriously delightful a nature to be considered calmly. Richard Eltham warned himself that he was indulging in a dream ; but, nevertheless, he locked up the safe that evening with a cheerful conviction that with any luck he might be accepted as his employer's future son-in-law at no very distant date. He took the addresses of the two watchmen from his book, and hurried home to his lodgings in Brixton to get his dinner at once ; for he meant to open his detective campaign that same night.

THE NATIONAL DEBT.

It was confidently expected, before the issue of President Cleveland's message, our troubles in the Transvaal, and recent activity in the Navy, that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would, at the close of the financial year, have one of the biggest surpluses on record. Available surplus it could hardly be called, because after the 31st of March it could only be applied to the reduction of the National Debt. Should the war-scare not have altered matters, there might be an unexpected drop of something like five millions sterling in the capital sum of British consols. Whether this should really be the case or not, it may not be uninteresting to know something about where all the money they represent originally went to.

Compared with most English institutions—for we can hardly use the word British to anything dating beyond the eighteenth century—the National Debt is quite modern. Kings and governments have always shown a propensity for borrowing, but until about two centuries ago, whenever the debts were not repudiated, they had sooner or later to be liquidated out of current revenue. Had it been otherwise, we should have heard less of the illegal taxation imposed by the Tudors and the Stewarts, as it would have been so much easier for them to obtain what they wanted by loan, based on the credit of the nation. After the Revolution which placed William III. on the throne, the total national liabilities fell short of one million sterling. But the great wars which that king prosecuted on the Continent, swallowed up more money than could possibly be raised by taxation, and the millions gradually increased in number ; the Bank of England having been established primarily to facilitate the raising of them. Even a century later, the total had not assumed serious dimensions, though the annual expenditure it entailed proved a grievous burden on an impoverished country. The war with the American colonies doubled it, and by the time the French Revolution of 1789 began to exercise its disturbing influence, the amount had reached the respectable figure of three hundred millions. That proved a mere bagatelle, however, for in the course of another quarter of a century, during which Great Britain was involved in almost every European complication, it was trebled, and after the battle of Waterloo, had attained to the record sum of nine hundred

millions sterling. Every political economist of that day was scared, and had it not been for the marvellous expansion of industry and commerce that followed, the nation would undoubtedly have become hopelessly bankrupt.

It must not be supposed, however, that the country ever received so much money, as the issue of a large proportion of the last six hundred millions was accompanied by jobbery and corruption of the grossest description. British credit in those days did not permit of loans being obtained on anything like the basis of 3 per cent., and there were thus two alternatives, either to pay a higher rate, or issue stock at the lower one at a heavy discount. Unfortunately the latter was chosen, though that was a blunder, and not an act of dishonesty. Statesmen and economists had no experience of national finance on a large scale, and were infatuated with the idea of redeeming the debt at a low price, entirely overlooking the possibility of market appreciation. It was in the allotment of the loans and the subsequent disbursement of the proceeds that the jobbery arose. No period of our political history has been productive of such scandals, and the votes, first of electors, and then of the members of Parliament elected, had to be purchased by the Government at a heavy price. Three per cents fluctuated during those years between a little under fifty and a trifle over seventy, averaging about sixty, but much of the new stock was issued to political supporters, at a price enabling them to realise at once a profit varying from 5 to 10 per cent. Needless to say, there was always a scramble for it, and much heartburning and disappointment among those who were left out, or who did not consider they had been rewarded with a sufficient amount. But the evil did not cease even then, for the army and navy contractors, into whose hands much of the money eventually passed, deliberately swindled the Government they were supposed to serve, and accumulated great fortunes with amazing rapidity. It is not too much to say that, for every hundred pounds of stock issued, the country received barely fifty in actual value.

We are confronted then by the disagreeable fact, not only that in redeeming debt we are paying back two sovereigns for every one borrowed, but that we are in reality paying interest at the rate of about 5½ per cent., instead of the 2½ we so fondly imagine. It is no use crying over spilt milk, and national obligations must be rigidly met. That the work of redemption is costly, every one will admit, but it is an important question whether, under present circumstances, the method of procedure is not unduly extravagant. It is the settled, as well as the commendable policy of both political parties in the State to make an annual reduction in the funded debt, and that is accomplished mainly in two ways. A fixed sum is set aside for its service, considerably in excess of what is necessary for the mere payment of interest, and the surplus is used for the purchase of stock in the open market, which is subsequently cancelled. It is easy to see that this surplus becomes larger each year, as the interest on the cancelled stock ceases and becomes available for

fresh purchases. And in addition to this, we have already seen that any budget surplus is invariably applied in the same manner. But there is another method known as terminable annuities. The holder of consols surrenders them absolutely to the Government, which, instead of paying him the ordinary rate of interest, grants him something like double for a definite and limited number of years, when the payment entirely ceases, and the stock is cancelled. In the early years of the next century, something like fifty millions of debt will disappear in this manner, and the annuities will cease, and provided there is no readjustment in the meantime, a sum equal to the interest on that amount will be annually applied to the purchase of more stock. The process of depletion therefore is going on, and promises to continue at a very rapid rate.

In addition to this funded debt, or consols, there is always a floating one of more or less important dimensions. Budget deficiencies, should they arise, have to be borrowed; sometimes estimates are passed for the expenditure of large sums within a short period, to be provided only by taxation spread over several years, and that money must meanwhile be borrowed. In these and other ways debt is accumulated, which it is not politic to render permanent, and it is raised by means of Treasury Bills, that is, Government promissory-notes, payable in three, six, and never more than twelve months. Whenever any of these mature, therefore, they can always be paid off provided there is sufficient money in the Treasury. Inasmuch as these bills are now being discounted at less than 1 per cent. per annum, there is a strong temptation to keep them in circulation, and pay off instant debt bearing interest at 2½ per cent.

At first sight that undoubtedly appears the wiser plan. But however satisfactory it may be from the sentimental point of view of the national credit, to see consols quoted at 106 or 107, it is an eminently unsatisfactory state of affairs for the pockets of the taxpayers; for not only has stock for the sinking fund to be purchased at that figure, but the competition of the Government brokers in the market helps to keep it up. It is bad enough to know that we are cancelling stock issued at fifty or sixty on such terms, but it will be intensely aggravating if, at a future period, perhaps at no very distant one, some grave national emergency arises which will necessitate its reissue, or in other words, that an extraordinary expenditure will be incurred beyond what can be raised by taxation or mere temporary borrowing. Under such conditions the rate of interest ruling would be much higher than it is now, confidence and credit would be disturbed, and the stock so eagerly mopped up at 106, would reappear at a figure much nearer 86. The question arises then whether it is wise policy to go on cancelling the national debt in large amounts at the present price?

That this policy is helping to intensify the evil there can be little doubt. Putting aside any feelings of patriotism, it must be admitted that there are reasons why the debts of other countries should stand quite as high in market value as our own. Nobody supposes that what-

ever may happen, France, Germany, or the United States would ever repudiate their national liabilities. Yet while British 2½ per cents. are at 106½, German threes are a little under 100, French threes a little over that figure, and United States fours at 112. All these funds are the favourite medium for safe investment in their respective countries, and are readily, almost greedily absorbed. In thrift and wealth, the English peasantry is not to be compared with that of France, and the latter is always ready to take up unlimited amounts of *Rente*. In the United States, the bonds may be used by banks as the basis of a note issue, and are eagerly purchased for that purpose. But in England, investment is confined mainly to one or two classes, banks and kindred institutions, whose business requires them to keep a certain amount of easily realisable securities, private trustees, and of course the public trusts, such as savings-banks. Other things being equal, therefore, British consols should not be higher than their foreign competitors. But there is one important difference. The demand is equally great everywhere. France, Germany, and the United States meet it every now and again by the creation of new stock; Great Britain reverses the process, constantly diminishes what is in existence, and by so doing raises the market against herself.

It is not a matter of suspending the sinking fund; that, for the present at any rate, must remain untouched. But there are other ways of applying it which ought to be considered. The Government, for instance, in one of its departments performs the work of a banker, borrowing money, and loaning it out at a somewhat higher rate of interest to local authorities for public purposes. In that way some portion of the fund might be used, but it would almost be preferable to allow it to remain idle for a time, rather than spend it on the costly luxury of consols at 106. That sooner or later they will fall to a more reasonable level is almost certain, and the accumulations might then be used to greater advantage than can be done at present. That many people are benefiting by the present high price is exceedingly doubtful. Those who invested when they were lower do not realise, because they could not use their money to any greater advantage with corresponding safety. They want a steady income without depreciation of capital; their object was not to increase it, and a decline in cost price would be no hardship. On the other hand, it would not be difficult to prove that there is an element of future danger in the situation, if it continues for any length of time, and any considerable aggregate of trust-money comes to be invested at a high level; and it is not only consols that have to be taken into account, but a large mass of other securities which enjoy many of the same privileges, and move in sympathy with them.

In the management of our National Debt, then, there is much more to be taken into account than its mere economical working. We are sometimes told that the debt is a blessing. At best, however, it is a doubtful one; the country would have got on very well without it, and we should soon console ourselves for its loss. In a

larger or smaller amount it will certainly last another century, and it is our duty to make it as little cumbersome as possible to those who follow us. Still it is well at times to recall to mind that posterity has done nothing for us, that it will not be over profuse in its thanks for what we do for it, and that it is quite possible to deal too generously with it. Times are hard and competition is keen, and the National Debt must not be allowed to inflict injustice on the present generation, in order that the next may reap an uncertain advantage.

THE MASTER CRAFTSMAN.*

By SIR WALTER BESANT.

CHAPTER III.—WAPPING.

How does one get to Wapping? It is not, I believe, generally known that there are trains which take the explorer to this secluded hamlet. They are the same trains which go under the Thames Tunnel. That is one way of getting to Wapping. Another, and a much better way, is to walk there from Tower Hill, past St. Katherine's Docks, where you may drop a tear over the wanton destruction of what should have been Eastminster, the Cathedral of East London. The traveller presently finds himself in a long riverside street. Tall warehouses and wharves are on the south side; on the north side, offices. North of the offices are the docks. Between the warehouses are stairs. Here are Hermitage stairs, and since there is a Hermitage Street, there was probably at one time or other a hermit established on this spot.

Then go back and resume your walk along the street. It is like the river itself, a busy highway of trade; the tall warehouses were built for trade; the cranes are out on the topmost floor, conducting the trade; men are swinging out heavy bales of goods and lowering them into wagons which will distribute the trade among other hands. The street, indeed, is full of wagons loaded and wagons unloaded; wagons standing under the cranes, wagons going away loaded and coming back empty. You would not believe there were so many wagons in London. Except for the drivers of the wagons and the men in the upper storeys tossing about the bales, there are no people to be seen in the street. Passengers there are none. Nobody walks in Wapping High Street except to and from his warehouse or his wharf. He goes there on business. Of shops there are but two or three, and those not of the best. And this is Wapping. It seems at first to be nothing but a narrow slip between the river and the docks. This is not quite true, however, as we shall presently see.

I entered the cradle of my race, fortunately, by the best way, the Tower Hill way. It seems a cradle to be proud of; all ancient crafts are honourable, but some are more honourable than others; surely boat-building is a very honourable craft. Noah, for instance, was an eminent boat-builder; probably the first example of that work has never been surpassed.

For the first time I found myself in the

midst of trade, actual, visible, tangible—fragrant even. It was a kind of discovery to me. I walked slowly revolving the thing. Exports and imports one reads about: they are words which to me had then little or no meaning. Here were people actually exporting and importing with tremendous zeal. The street was a hive of industry. Not one face but was full of business; not one but was set, absorbed, serious, observing nothing because it was so full of thought. No one lit cigarettes; no one lounged; no one talked or laughed with his neighbour. All were occupied, all wrapped in thought. All walked with a purpose: no less a purpose, indeed, than the winning of the daily bread, or the creation of a pile on which the children could live in idleness.

Presently I came to the mouth of the London Dock, where a swing bridge crosses the narrow entrance, and is rolled back on hinges to let the ships pass in and out. It was open when I reached the place, and a ship was slowly passing through: a three-masted sailing-ship, of which there are still some left. I watched the beautiful thing with the tall masts and shrouds—man never made anything more beautiful than a sailing-ship. Looking to the left I saw the crowded masts in the dock; looking to the right I saw the ships going down the river, and heard the dulcet note of the Siren.

The ship passed through; the bridge swung round; I passed over it and continued my way. At this point Wapping widens and becomes a right-angled triangle, whose hypotenuse is the river, and whose altitude is the East London Dock. This triangle, with the riverside street, is all that the docks have left of old Wapping village. On this occasion, however, I did not discover the triangle; I walked on, the street continuing with its warehouses and its wharves and its river stairs.

A little beyond the bridge I came to a house which would have arrested my attention by its appearance alone, apart from the name upon its door-plate. For it was a solid red brick, eighteenth-century house. The bricks were of the kind which grow more beautiful with years. The door, with a shell decoration above it, was in the middle, and there was one window on each side of it. In the two storeys above there were three windows in each: the roof was of warm red tiles. There were green shutters to the lower windows: a solid, comfortable old house. It was well kept up: the paint was fresh; the windows were clean; the steps were white; the brass door-plate, which was small, was burnished bright; and on it, in letters half-effaced, I read the name of Burnikel.

"The cradle!" I thought. "Here was born the ancestral builder of boats. But where is the yard?"

On the other side of the street stood a huge rambling shed—two sheds side by side, built of wood and painted black. Through the wide open door I saw the stout ribs of a half-built barge sticking up in readiness to receive the planking of her sides. And there was the sound of hammers. And to make quite sure, there was painted across the shed in white letters the name 'Burnikel and Burnikel, boat and barge builders.'

I stepped in and looked round. There were one or two unfinished boats beside the big barge: wood was lying about everywhere, stacked on the low rafters of the roof, in heaps, thick wood and thin wood; there were tools and appliances—some I understood, some were new to me. Men were working. At the sight of all this carpentry work my spirits rose. This was the kind of work I loved. A beautiful place, such a place, I thought, as I would like to work in myself. And picturesque, too, with its high roof and its black rafters and its front open to the river, commanding a noble panorama, wider than is afforded by any of the stairs in those narrow lanes.

At that moment the master came out of a little enclosed box in the corner, called 'Office,' which was big enough, at least, for a high desk and some books.

At the outset, in the evening, I had remarked the curious resemblance of my cousin to myself. By daylight the resemblance was not so marked. He was one of those men with whom a simple inch and a half above the six feet in height makes them tower over all other men. He looked tall and broad, and strong above any of his fellows. So looked Saul. He glanced around him quickly as he came out, as if to see that his men were working with zeal and knowledge. Then he stepped across the yard and greeted his visitor gravely.

"I saw you come in," he said. "I only half expected you."

"Well, I did want to see the old place. And I wanted to see you again."

"Here it is, and here I am. Not much of a place after all. Just the same: the yard is the same, the beams of the roof are the same, and though the tiles have been removed, the work is the same. If your ancestor was to look in here, he'd see nothing changed but the workmen's clothes. They've left off aprons, and they've left off stockings. That's all."

"Good! We are thus in the last century."

"Yes. The river's changed, though. The Port of London was a much finer place formerly, when the ships were ranged in double line all down the Pool, and all the lading was done by barges—Burnikel's barges. Well! Look round you, Sir George. Here is where your great-grandfather worked, and where your great-great-grandfather, and so on, ever so far back. This is where you came from."

He took his visitor over the little yard, pointing out something of the craft and mystery of boat-building.

"I ought to have boat-building in the blood," I observed. "The mystery seems familiar to me. Don't you think that so many generations of boat-building—with this little break of just two lives, one a judge, and one a—nothing—ought to make me take to the trade naturally, as a duck to water?"

Robert Burnikel answered seriously. He was a very serious young man. Besides, light conversation is unknown at Wapping.

"Why not?" he said. "Natural aptitude must come with generations of work. There is a kind of caste in every trade. I know a line of carpenters, from father to son; and a line of watchmakers; and a line of blacksmiths.

These men of mine are all the sons of boat-builders; they grew up in the trade. I don't think they could have done anything else so well. As for you—well, your grandfather was a judge.'

'For the first time in my life, I am ashamed to say that I ^{was}.'

'Not that you need be ashamed, I suppose, but still he broke the line. All the rest of us have always been boat-builders or sailors.'

'I suppose, now, that you could make a boat yourself, with your own hands, from keel to gunwale, from stem to stern?'

'He would be a poor kind of master who couldn't do anything better than his men. I used to wor^l hammer, and saw, and plane with the men when I was a 'prentice.'

So we talk about boats and boat-building. Then the master builder looked at his watch. 'Four o'clock,' he said. 'Now come over the way. I live in the old house built by the first of them who came here. We can talk for an hour or so before tea. I told them you might be coming to tea.'

Terrible! Who was 'them'? Fair cousinses? I trembled and followed.

The old house was that of a solid and substantial merchant who understood the arts of comfort. The hall was wainscoted with a dark polished oak relieved by a line of gold along the top and lit by a broad window on the stairs. The staircase was broad and stately: such a staircase as is impossible in a narrow London house. Robert Burnikel opened the door of the room on the left. 'Come in here,' he said, 'till tea is ready. We can talk at our ease in here. This is my own room.' He looked around with some pride, not so much in the old-world beaut^y of the room, in which any one might have iken pride, as in the things which belonged and proclaimed, his own studies. It woul^b be difficult, indeed, to find anywhere a mor^l beautiful room. The walls were of panelled oak, dark and polished: over the mantel was a mass of carved wood, grapes in bunches, vine-leaves, scrolls, branches, heads of cupids, all apparently thrown together upon the wall, but there was method in the mass; the fruit and the leaves formed a frame round a shield on which was blazoned—in proper heraldic colours, or and gules and azure—a coat of arms.

'Why,' I cried, 'those are my arms! I thought they were gr^l to the judge as the first "armiger" of the family. He had them already, then. I ^{am} very curious. We were a family of gentlefolk.'

'The first Burnikel, you see, of whom we know anything builds this fine house, lines it with cedar and rosewood, and oak wainscoting; adorns it with wood-car^{ing}.'

'That overmantel work might belong to a later time,' I interrupted.

'And had a coat of arms. He was a gentleman, I suppose. If you care about that fact, I don't.'

'Yes, I do care about that fact. Gentility is a real thing, whatever you may think. I am very glad indeed to recover this long-lost ancestor.'

One side of the room, however, was com-

pletely spoiled as regards the original intention of him who clothed it with cedar, by the introduction of a bookcase covering the whole wall and fitted with books. There was a central table littered with papers, and a smaller table with a row of books. And there were only two chairs, both of them wooden chairs with arms—the student's chair. The books, one might observe, had the external appearance of having been read and well used; the bindings being cracked or creased and somehow robbed of their pristine shininess. I looked at them. Heavens! What a serious library of solid reading! Herbert Spencer, Mill, Hallam, Freeman, Stubbs, Hamilton, Spinoza, Bagshot, Seeley, Lecky, and a crowd of others for history; Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Wallace, and more for science; rows of books on the institutions of the country and on the questions of the day.

'These are my books,' Robert pointed to them with undisguised pride. 'I don't believe there's a better collection this side of the Tower. I collected them all myself. And what's more, I've read them, every one, and I know them all.'

'I suppose,' I ventured, 'that you are not married?'

'No, I am not. No, sir. Marriage holds a man down just where it finds him. If I were married I should be wheeling the perambulator, saving money for the children, running for the doctor. No, I shall marry some day—when I have succeeded. Not before.'

'Then you have a mother or a sister living with you?'

'No. Father died five years ago, and there were left my mother with myself, two brothers and a sister. The business isn't good enough for more than one. So my two brothers went off to Tasmania, and they've started a yard of their own. My mother went out to see them, and I think she'll stay. You see mother is a determined kind of a woman; she'd always been master here, father being an easy kind of man, and she wanted to go on being master. Now, there can't be two masters in this house. So, when she understood that, she concluded to go. My sister Kate went with her. Kate wanted to be master too. So it's just as well for family peace and quietness that they did go away. I'm all for peace, and always shall be, but I mean to be master in my own house.'

The speech revealed things volcanic; the son of the mother, the mother of the son, the sister of the brother, the brother of the sister: all masterful, and all striving for the mastery. And the son getting the best of it. So he made a solitude and he called it peace.

'And you are left all alone in this great house?'

'No. Some cousins of mine—not your cousins—mother's cousins, keep the house for me. They are a retired skipper and his daughter. The daughter does the housekeeping. She is also my secretary, and keeps the accounts of the place over the way. Can't follow an argument, of course. No woman can.' This is to have lived all your life at Wapping. 'You'll see her presently. I've told her, by the way, if that matters—only I want you to understand how I stand, and what sort of a man I am

—that I shall marry her one of these days, when I have got on. Not before. Of course, he snorted, 'she doesn't expect any fondling and kissing and foolishness.'

'Poor girl!' I did not say this. I only murmured, 'Yes, I see, of course,' in the usual way when one is surprised and a coherent reply is difficult.

Here was a gallant lover for you! Here was an ardent lover! Here, in the language of the last century, were flames and darts and pains and madness of love! He was going to wait for ten or twelve or forty years, until he had achieved the object of his ambition: and there was to be no fondling, and the future wife was to be reduced to proper order!

'And now,' said the man of ambition, abruptly, 'about that information that you promised to get for me. That's what we came here to talk about, not coats of arms and girls. Have you got it?'

'I have been to see a man whom I know. He is a politician; he lives in politics; he thinks about nothing else. And I spent this morning with him discussing your case—much as you told me last night. I can only tell you—I felt a little embarrassed, for obvious reasons—what he told me.'

'Go on. What did he say? That a boat-builder from Wapping mustn't dare to think of the House?'

'Not at all. They don't mind much what a man is by calling. What I understood last night is this. You wish to go into the House and to make your way upwards by your own abilities, alone. You will force the House to recognise you.'

'Yes. My model is John Bright. I've got his speeches and I know his history.'

'But John Bright became in the long-run a Party man.'

'John Bright was a power in the country as an independent member long before he went into the Cabinet. I want to be a power in the country.'

Then I told him all I had learned; the first steps and so forth; and this and that. He listened patiently: when I told him what other men did, he nodded his head; when I warned him, he shook his head; when I finished, he sprang to his feet impatiently.

'No more warning, thank you. I shall succeed. You do not understand yet, Sir George, that you have to do with a very able man indeed.'

This kind of talk may be arrogant and offensive. But Robert Burnikel was neither. He made an arrogant assertion with a calmness which was modesty. He advanced it as one who states a scientific fact. Belief in himself was a part of the man's nature. More than this, as you will see, he succeeded in convincing those who heard him.

'Now for my fitness,' he went on. 'Listen to this. First of all, there's nobody like me in the House at all. I am a master craftsman. I make what I sell. I am not a shopkeeper. I make. There are working-men in the House: shopkeepers, manufacturers, lawyers, country gentlemen, but the master craftsman the House hasn't got. And it wants him badly.'

'Well?'

'That is not all. This place, so secluded and cut off by the docks and its river, is a little world in itself. You can study everything in Wapping. I know the working of the whole system—parish—vestry—county council—school board—everything. I know all about the church, the parish, the school, the workhouse, the parish rates. That's practical knowledge. But that is not enough. One must understand principles. All institutions are based on principles. So I have read Herbert Spencer and Mill, and all the books that treat of practical things and what they mean.'

'Go on.' I grew more and more interested in this man—this strong man.

'Well, I read the debates every day. Nothing interests me in the paper so much as the debates. Day after day I say to myself when I read the rubbish that is talked there, "This is wrong. This is ignorant. This is foolish. This is mischievous." And I know what I should have said.'

'Well. But you are as yet untried in oratory and in debate.'

'Not at all. I went into the Blackwall Parliament at sixteen; at twenty I led the House. I can speak. I have studied the art of oratory. I have read all I could find on the subject. I tell you that I am an eloquent man. I know that the House doesn't want claptrap; I spoke at Poplar last winter, and I made 'em laugh and made 'em cry just as I chose, and because I wanted to try what I could do with them. That was only claptrap. I can speak better than that. And as for my voice, listen—Do, Re, Mi.—He ran up and down the scales not only with correctness and ease, but with a flexible, rich, and musical baritone.—'That's good enough for anything, isn't it? Why, as soon as I found I had a voice I rejoiced. I went into the church choir in order to learn the ~~use~~ of it. I didn't want to sing in the choir; it wastes good time, but there is the practice. Nothing like singing for keeping the voice flexible.'

'Very good. Very good indeed.'

'Well, I have told you everything. What do you think about my fitness to go into the House to-morrow, and to rise in it?'

The question was meek. The manner was aggressive. It said plainly, 'Deny, if you dare, my fitness.'

MEMORIALS AND RELICS OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

EDWARD FITZGERALD, who had been refreshing his memory with *The Fortunes of Nigel* in 1881, could not help remarking to his correspondent, Fanny Kemble: 'Oh, Sir Walter is not done for yet by Austens and Eliots. If one of his merits were not his *clear daylight*, one thinks, there ought to be societies to keep his lamp trimmed as well as Mr Browning.' Well, there is a Scott Club to keep his lamp trimmed, if that were needed, which dines and has excursions, indulges in speeches and the collection of relics and preservation of letters, in order to keep his memory green. The publishers have done their

part in producing varied and abundant editions of his novels, and we have now at least a dozen to choose from. Such a pother is being made at this fag-end of the nineteenth century over many minor writers, that, with limited time and endurance, there seems a risk that Scott may not receive his due from the average reader. Ruskin has said that he could find no words full enough to tell what good Scott had in him to do his readers. The recent issue of his *Journal* and an instalment of *Private Letters* only confirms the good impression made by the ten volumes of Lockhart's *Life*. For, as Mr Quiller-Couch observes on this point, 'you may explore here and explore there, and still you find pure gold; for the man was gold right through.' The genial sunshine which Washington Irving felt warming every 'creeping thing' around him into 'heart and confidence' still breathes in the literature which flowed from his pen.

One of the first attempts at a popular biography of Scott was that issued about a week after his death in connection with *Chambers's Journal*. It was announced that this life of Sir Walter Scott was given in connection with the *Journal* 'at a mere trifle, as a still stronger earnest than any hitherto held out, of the desire of the publishers to reduce general literature to the level of the whole community.' It was claimed that there was as much matter given there for three-halfpence as in many a half-guinea work. Also that for about ten years the editors (William and Robert Chambers, who were amongst the ten or twelve persons who left Edinburgh to attend Scott's funeral) had been collecting materials for this brief biography.* A very interesting budget of original anecdotes was also contributed to *Chambers's Journal* by Mrs John Ballantyne. Many waifs and strays of anecdotes and driblets of information have since floated from time to time into print, as it were from the four winds of heaven, and of some of these we may avail ourselves here. Scott lived a robust, full, and busy life, and left his impress in many unsuspected nooks and corners. And the time seems ripe for a fresh gleaning, which can only serve to heighten the impression of his greatness, and simplicity, and robust healthfulness. The late Mr Dykes Campbell had in view some supplementary work to Lockhart, which he, of all men, would have done with patience and intelligence. Robert Chambers, James Hogg, R. H. Hutton, C. D. Yonge, George Gilfillan, and others, have issued monographs on Scott. Mr Andrew Lang is busy with a revised edition of Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, as well as a Life of the biographer. In the way of review articles there is nothing better, despite its watered praise, than Carlyle's essay. Scott's great-granddaughter has described the antiquarian relics of Abbotsford, and Andrew Lang has here and there unearthed some fresh information for his edition of the novels.

One might begin by asking, where is the monument to Scott in Westminster Abbey? Thereby hangs a tale. All the world has admired the result of the labours of that self-taught genius, G. M. Kemp, which graces

Princes Street in Edinburgh—as Professor Masson has remarked, the finest monument yet erected to a man of genius anywhere. A few enthusiastic Scotsmen subscribed in one night funds sufficient for a copy of it for New York Central Park. Native Scotsmen were none so enthusiastic over the home monument, for in February 1844 it had come to a standstill for lack of funds, £3000 being required to carry it to the desired height. Nor is it quite completed yet! Sir Thomas Dick Lauder asked the aid of Charles Mackay through the *Morning Chronicle*. A London committee was formed, but the subscription list only reached £269. A Waverley Ball had the patronage of the Queen and Prince Albert, and yielded £1100. These sums were utilised on the main design, and not on statuettes or accessories, as was done with the sum of £600 raised by the London Waverley Ball of 1871. This first London committee got a good deal of wholesome advice in prosecuting their labours. Lockhart looked coldly on the design chosen, and would have preferred a sitting statue at the south end of Castle Street. Lord Lytton thought that the 'money spent on the living might have saved the struggle and prolonged the days of Scott.' What was then being done was but a mockery of the dead. His works were his best monument. If the Scotch wished for such a monument, then it was right they should pay for it, for 'the moment the Scotch suffered Sir Walter Scott to leave Abbotsford unpaid, they lost the only opportunity of rendering practical homage to the man who had brought gold into their country through a thousand channels.' Charles Dickens rather concurred in this opinion. Croker would not subscribe again, because he believed he would never see the monument, although somebody wickedly offered to pay his fare to Edinburgh if he would only do so. In spite of all this criticism, the monument was so far completed at a cost of £15,000, and opened in 1846.

As regards a memorial to Scott in Westminster Abbey, the matter, it appears, stands thus. A committee collected subscriptions to the amount of £171, and Sir John Steell was entrusted with the execution of a medallion, which he completed in 1887. Although the subscribers admired and approved the completed design, Mr J. L. Pearson, R.A., the Abbey architect, pronounced it 'out of scale, and that it would be undesirable to put it in the Abbey.' Dean Bradley coincided in this view, so the medallion has lain in charge of the clerk of works, Westminster, ever since. We are glad to hear, however, that the matter, thanks to a strong memorial, is likely to be satisfactorily arranged.

It is well known that after Scott's failure in 1825, a committee of legal gentlemen stepped in and prevented the disposal of the Abbotsford collection of books and antiquarian curiosities. These are vested in trustees, the Dean and Council of the Faculty of Advocates, Edinburgh. The Scott Museum in Abbotsford occupies five out of the forty rooms there, and the revenue derived from entrance fees is over £400 a year. The house, with grounds and shootings, when let to a tenant, brings £200 a year. Thither to this 'romance in stone and lime' come the feet of pilgrims from the ends of the earth.

* Now published in a revised edition, with Autobiography, in Chambers's series of popular biographies.

A writing-desk on which Scott wrote most of his novels was given to his amanuensis, William Laidlaw; on the death of his daughter Katherine, last year, it passed, along with a collection of letters, to her nephew, Mr W. L. Carruthers, Inverness. The gold snuff-box presented by Scott to Sir Adam Ferguson is now in possession of Mr C. E. S. Chambers, the editor of this *Journal*. In 1832 Mary Gray Garden, a daughter of the Ettrick Shepherd, possessed a small gold brooch, set with pearls, and containing a lock of Sir Walter's hair, perfectly white, cut off after death, and given by one of the family to her father. His pony-phaeton was possessed by Mr W. Macfie of Clermiston, Midlothian; the sofa and fire-grate from his study in Castle Street, by Rev. Donald Masson, Edinburgh. To the Advocates' Library, which already possessed a novel of Scott's in manuscript, the Marquis of Huntly has handed over forty-seven instruments of credit, drafts, and promissory-notes (1819-1825), the latter showing sums amounting to £30,000. The gold watch which Scott presented to Dr Clarkson of Melrose, his medical adviser, after Lady Scott's death, is still worn by a descendant. A ring, bearing the inscription, 'From Jedediah Cleisbotham to his friend Bailie Nicol Jarvie,' along with a scarf pin, are possessed by a son of Mr Mackay, who acted this character in *Rob Roy*. The picture by Sir David Wilkie, 'The Abbotsford Family,' representing the Scott family in lowland Scots peasant costume, was added in 1895 to the Scottish National Gallery, at a cost of eight hundred guineas.

A find of one hundred and three letters written by Scott to Mr George Craig, agent of the Leith Bank, Galashiels, was announced in 1894, but, as may be supposed, these relate chiefly to transactions in money matters with Constable, Coutts, and the Ballantynes. One letter written after his failure, January 28, 1826, proceeds thus: 'The most unexpected failure of Messrs Constable & Co. has thrown my affairs into such irremediable perplexity, that, with the perfect confidence of doing justice to every human being, I have been compelled to ask time to do so. . . . I have the pleasure to think that no other person is likely to be a loser but myself, if this mode (a private trust) should be generally adopted, and that in my own life, if God grant me life and health.' The grand gatherings at Abbotsford were over; the furniture of his Edinburgh house was sold, and he sat down bravely at fifty-five to redeem a debt of over £100,000. By his unparalleled labours, and the judicious farming of his copyrights by his new publisher, Robert Cadell, this was accomplished soon after his death. Cadell was said to have bought most of Scott's copyrights for £8400, though more than three times that amount was paid ere they were all secured. Just before Cadell's death in 1849, these were valued at £60,000; while he was said to have made £100,000 in business, chiefly as Scott's publisher. These copyrights were sold by Messrs Hodgson at the London Coffee-house in March 26, 1851, and purchased by Messrs A. & C. Black for £27,000. 'Time and I against any two, no man in the end shall lose one penny by me,' Scott remarked after his failure. While

this was so, it is impossible to estimate what the commercial value of the Waverley novels has been to Edinburgh and Scotland generally; and particularly to paper-makers, printers, bookbinders, publishers, and booksellers.

Most of the printable material connected with Scott, which has been discovered, has been readily given to the public, with the exception of two novels which he began in the decadence of his powers at Naples, the one entitled *The Siege of Malta*, the other *Bizarre*. Lockhart gives the foundation for the last story in the *Life*. A series of imaginary Private Letters of the Reign of James I. has been printed in one of the magazines with Mrs Maxwell-Scott's consent. These were the letters which Scott had penned in 1821, when warned by his friends that he was throwing away good material for an historical romance. He took their advice, went no further, and wrote a novel instead, *The Fortunes of Nigel*.

The coursing meets at Abbotsford seem to have been much enjoyed. 'Losh, woman,' said a farmer to his wife, 'what a day we've had! I wish I could sleep till this time next year. The hunt is the only thing that's worth living for.' Maida, described as one of the finest dogs of its kind ever seen in this country, the noblest and most celebrated of all his dogs, is believed to have shortened its life by excessive fatigue in keeping up with the greyhounds at these coursing meetings. This favourite animal was a present from Colonel Ronaldson Macdonell of Glenarry. He was a cross between the Pyrenean wolf-dog and the deer-hound.

An Edinburgh High Street missionary frequently related an incident of his Selkirk boyhood. He had witnessed the death of a companion who had gone up to pat a horse in a harvest-field, which had kicked him so severely in the head that he died. It was the duty of Scott (then sheriff) to inquire into the cause of death. He sat down in a chair beside a little table, took the boy on his knee, looked down in a kind and encouraging way in the boy's face, and clapping him on the head, said, 'Now, Johnnie, what did the horse dae to the little laddie?' His kindly manner won the boy's confidence, and he told his story in boyish language, and at the close, Scott said, 'There's a sixpence to you, Johnnie, for telling me yer story sae weel.' It is related that he seldom passed boys on the road without speaking, or taking notice of them in some way. Miss Skene has related a pretty anecdote also of her childhood, when Scott discovered she was reading the *Abbot*. 'Well, my little lady, what have you got there? I suppose it is the *Arabian Nights*.' The little girl raised her head soberly, and fixed her eyes on his kind face, and replied: 'No; it is a book called the *Abbot*.' The great man showed his displeasure so plainly, and at the same time hid the enormity of her guilt from her father, who was present, that the book was instantly put away.

When the eldest son of Mr Maxwell-Scott of Abbotsford was born, the Queen is reported to have telegraphed her congratulations: 'He shall be knighted "Sir Walter" when he is 21.' When his mother was presented at court by her aunt, the Duchess of Buccleuch, the Queen kissed her on both cheeks before the court,

saying, 'This is all we have left of Sir Walter.' As Princess Victoria she saw Sir Walter Scott in her ninth year, when he dined with the Duchess of Kent at Kensington.

The world, and Scotland particularly, has never been so enthusiastic about Scott as about Burns; but Scott's creed in life and literature had the democratic touch of a big heart, with the pride of a Scottish laird and gentleman. Once when writing to Miss Edgeworth, he reproved her for attaching too much importance to literature and literary people. 'Let me tell you,' he wrote, 'that I have had the privilege of knowing some of the most celebrated men and women of my time, and that I have derived more satisfaction and comfort from the conversation and example of the poor, unlettered, hard-working people, than from all the wisdom of the learned folks. I have heard finer sentiments and seen finer lives among the poor people than I have ever seen or heard of anywhere outside the pages of the Bible. Believe me, my dear, all human learning is mere moonshine compared with the culture of the heart.' And this goes well with his death-bed advice to his son-in-law, Lockhart: 'My dear, be a good man—be virtuous—be religious—be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here.'

THE SEA QUEEN.

By JAMES WORKMAN.

I.

THE following telegram, addressed to Richard Carson, arrived one afternoon in July, at an isolated post-office on the coast of Skye: '*Sea Queen off Holyhead. All well.*' Maggie Mackenzie, the telegraph clerk, was alone when she received it. Her cheeks flushed and her eyes sparkled as she copied it out.

'That's brave news!' she exclaimed. 'Mr Blake will be a proud man to-day. My certes, he wouldn't be long at the fishing if he knew what was waiting for him here. I should like fine to see his face when he reads it—and I will, too, for I'll hand him the telegram myself the minute he comes in.'

But the light went out of her eyes and she looked puzzled and distressed when she realised that the telegram was addressed to Carson and not to Blake. Carson was not the owner of the *Sea Queen*. Why should the telegram be addressed to him? The men were old acquaintances, and were both stopping at the inn to which the post-office was attached; but it never even occurred to Maggie that Carson might have instructed an agent to forward the telegram in order that he might be the first to communicate the glad tidings to Blake. His most casual acquaintance would have smiled at the bare idea of such a thing. Maggie had, moreover, very good reasons for believing that he detested Blake, and would not scruple to injure him if the opportunity presented itself. He suspected—as he had bluntly informed her—that Alf Blake was responsible for what he considered her incomprehensible refusal to be-

come his wife; and if he could hit on a scheme, however unscrupulous, of crushing his rival, he was not the man to hesitate.

Still it seemed impossible that the innocent-looking telegram before her could be used as a weapon against Alf, and with a smile at her fanciful suspicions Maggie picked up an envelope in which to enclose it. At the same moment the fragments of a conversation which she had overheard the previous night flashed across her mind, and seemed at once to supply a motive for Carson's conduct. She had gathered from the disjointed sentences which reached her that Carson—a professional speculator—had offered Alf a merely nominal price for the *Sea Queen*, and that Alf, despairing of her safe arrival, had almost consented to accept it. If Carson had agreed to increase his offer by a hundred or two, the bargain would have been completed on the spot. Now that Carson was sure of the *Sea Queen's* safety, she had no doubt that he would keep the telegram in his pocket, increase his offer, and induce Alf to part with the vessel for a fraction of its real value.

If he did so, the rosy dreams of fame and success that had come to Alf with the *Sea Queen*—an unexpected legacy from a wealthy relative—would melt into thin air. He was an impetuous journalist with literary aspirations, and he had intended to sell the vessel, invest the proceeds, give up reporting, devote himself entirely to literature, and so realise the most cherished ambition of his life. His name was already known as a writer of short stories and descriptive articles, and with a permanent private income to fall back upon, he had no fear of the future. But unfortunately the *Sea Queen* was not insured, and after leaving Cape Coast Castle at the advertised date, was already two or three weeks overdue; and Alf, who had been waiting in an agony of suspense to hear news of the missing vessel, was beginning to abandon all hope of her arrival. Maggie was sure from his tone and manner on the previous night that Carson would find no difficulty in carrying out his infamous scheme.

Though it was clearly her duty to deliver the telegram at once, she still stood gazing at it with an air of painful indecision. Alf was fishing in the lochs among the hills, miles away across the wet moors. Even if she had been free to leave the post-office, how could she be sure of finding him, or at least of doing so without Carson, who was sitting in the porch staring moodily at the driving mist, discovering what she had done.

Discovery would mean ruin. It was illegal to keep back the telegram or to disclose its contents. She had taken the usual oath. She had solemnly and sincerely declared that she would not wittingly or willingly open or delay or cause to be opened or delayed anything that came into her hands or custody by reason of her employment relating to the post-office, except by the consent of the person or persons to whom the same should be directed. If she were found guilty of violating her oath, she would be instantly dismissed. She believed Carson to be absolutely unscrupulous. If he discovered that she had spoiled his plans by disclosing the contents of the telegram, she did

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not believe he would spare her. Even if he did so for the time being, she would ever afterwards be at his mercy. She remembered with a shudder the expression of his eyes, the hard set lines of his face, when he told her that sooner or later he would force her to marry him. What might the fear of exposure compel her to do? If she had already found it difficult to struggle against his strong will and dogged pertinacity, how would she be able to resist him when her whole future, her honour, her livelihood depended upon his silence?

She loved Alf. She realised that clearly enough now; but she did not believe that, except in the way of friendship, he cared for her. If he loved her, if she were certain of it, the sacrifice would be so much easier. But would the consciousness of having thrown away all that makes life worth living, merely to prevent an act of injustice, comfort her amid the reproaches, the contempt, and pity of her friends and relatives? To violate her oath, to face humiliation and disgrace, and then to be abandoned to a lonely, loveless, miserable life, seemed burden too heavy to be borne. If she were dismissed—Her face suddenly flushed crimson and then turned white. Would dismissal be her only punishment? It flashed upon her that it might prove the lightest part of the penalty she would have to bear. With trembling fingers she searched a drawer in which she remembered a copy of the Act relating to such matters had been placed. She found it, and this is what she read:

'Any person having official duties connected with the Post-office, or acting on behalf of the Postmaster-general, who shall, contrary to his duty, disclose or in any way make known or intercept the contents of a telegraphic message, or any telegram entrusted to the Postmaster-general for the purpose of transmission, shall in England and Ireland be guilty of a misdemeanour, and in Scotland of a crime and offence, and shall upon conviction be subject to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve calendar months.'

As she read it she was seized with a panic. She could no longer debate the matter in cold blood. Her brain whirled round. She could not think. She could only act, and her action was naturally the result of her sudden terror. She slipped the telegram into an envelope, and almost ran out of the office.

'Hamish!' she called breathlessly. 'Hamish!'

A little bare-legged Highland boy came patterling along the passage.

'Away with this to Mr Carson. He's in the porch. Away with you this minute.'

He darted away with the telegram in his hand, and then she realised what she had done.

'Hamish!' she cried feebly. But the boy had disappeared.

She turned back into the office, faint and dizzy, and leaning on the desk, buried her face in her hands.

'Oh, what'll I do, what will I do?' she moaned. 'I've spoiled his life—I've ruined him.'

From an official and legal point of view, she had done her duty, and yet she was sick at heart with shame and self-loathing. It seemed to her at that moment that she had purchased

her own safety weakly and selfishly at the expense of the man she loved.

Hamish scurried past the window and in at the door.

'D'ye see that?' he cried breathlessly, opening his little brown fist, and revealing a shilling. 'Mr Carson gied it me. I'm thinking it will be good news he was gettin', for he smiled and looked awfu' pleased, and patted me on the back and gied me the shillin'.'

Now that Maggie had taken the irrevocable step, she would have given worlds to retrace it. She seized a form and mechanically wrote out a copy of the telegram; but a moment after threw it impatiently aside. Alf was miles away among the moors, and it was running too great a risk to entrust it to a messenger. If she did so, questions were sure to be asked, and the truth would come out sooner or later. She could not leave the post-office herself. Macdonald, the postmaster and proprietor of the inn, was the only other person who could attend to the telegraph, and he had driven to Broadford, and the time of his return was uncertain. In the meantime, Carson might grow impatient, and instead of waiting for Alf to turn up, might tramp across the hills to meet him. Peering cautiously out of the window, she waited with beating heart to see what he would do. He came out of the porch, scowled at the rain and driving mist, and went back. He reappeared again and again, and every time she expected him to take the road across the hills; but after throwing a black look round and muttering angrily to himself, he invariably retreated into the porch.

Maggie had learned to hate the long monotonous days when the rain dripped ceaselessly from sunrise to nightfall, the mainland disappeared in mist, and the dismal gray sea moaned drearily among the rocks. But now the least pause in the steady downpour, the faintest lightening of the sky, made her heart flutter with fear, and she prayed that the rain might not stop, and that Alf might stay among the moors until she had time to think, to decide upon some course of action. She longed for a few hours', even a few minutes' delay. Some way of escape might present itself. Macdonald might arrive and leave her free to act as she thought best. Some friend or agent of Alf's in Liverpool might telegraph the news of the *Sea Queen's* arrival, and then all would be plain-sailing.

She heard the sound of wheels. Was that Macdonald? She darted to the window. It was only a party of guests from the Castle driving merrily through the rain. The sound of steps took the blood from her face. Could it be Alf? It proved to be a drenched fisherman trudging past with a string of saithe, bream, and whiting. The electric bell rang, and she leapt to her feet. It might be a message from Alf's agent. It was only a telegram to one of the guests at the Castle. The suspense became unbearable. She could not sit still. She moved restlessly about the room, trying vainly to determine what she ought to do, listening and watching for Carson, for Macdonald, for Alf, and utterly incapable of deciding on any definite course of action. When

the time came for decision, she did not hesitate a moment. She acted half mechanically, moved—as it seemed—by some power outside herself.

Several hours passed before Macdonald arrived. She thrust the copy of the telegram into her pocket and was half-way to the door, when she stopped abruptly. Carson had turned out again, and was talking to Macdonald.

'Wet day, Macdonald,' he remarked briskly.

'Ay, it's a coarse day,' replied Macdonald drily; 'but it's a grand day for the fishing. Mr Blake'll be away to the loch, I'm thinking.'

Carson was no favourite with the innkeeper. His want of enthusiasm about fishing, and his fear of getting wet, had lowered him immensely in Macdonald's esteem.

'Oh yes,' rejoined Carson. 'He went off soon after breakfast. Wanted to drag me with him, but I wasn't such a fool. Don't see the force of tramping over wet moors, and standing up to my waist in water all day, for the sake of catching half-a-dozen beastly little fish.'

'Ah, well,' said Macdonald coldly, 'it takes all sorts of men to make a world, and I've met many a bigger fool than Mr Blake.'

'Have you any idea which way he'll come back?' asked Carson, ignoring Macdonald's somewhat aggressive tone. 'I thought I might stroll up the hill a bit and meet him.'

'I can't tell you that,' answered Macdonald. 'There's half-a-dozen ways he might come home, and if you'll take my advice, you'll just bide where you are. If you go up the hill, you'll be getting your feet wet, and then who knows what may happen to you.'

Macdonald came in grinning through the passage on which the door of the office opened, and Maggie intercepted him. She told him she wanted to go out, and begged him to attend to any telegrams that might arrive. The grin disappeared, and he looked a trifle crusty.

'My word, lassie, you're no blate,' said he. 'I'm just wet to the skin, and wanting my dinner. Can't you wait a while?'

But Macdonald, like most of those who came in contact with Maggie, could refuse her nothing. One glance at her piteous face, pale and quivering with agitation, disarmed him.

'Hoots, lassie,' he exclaimed; 'I'll manage fine. Away with you.'

She caught a Tam-o'-Shanter from behind the door, slipped it over her curly dark hair, and darted out into the rain. She whisked round to the back of the inn, and ran up the hill. She wished in the first place to escape from Carson's keen eyes, though even yet she hardly knew whether she would warn Alf or not. The path twisted up the side of the hill, and she was soon out of sight of the inn. Then she walked more slowly. The rain was still falling steadily. The heather was like a sponge, the narrow path a series of runlets and pools, the ground soft mire, in which at times she sank ankle deep. The hills before her, the sea behind her, were shrouded in mist. She toiled higher and higher, the rain still falling, the mist thickening. Her Tam-o'-Shanter was drenched through, and her clothes hung on her like lead. Though she had even yet no clear notion of what she would say or do if she met him, she was tortured by the fear

of missing Alf. If he had gone astray in the mist, or come by another path, she might be unable to see him alone before he met Carson. Goaded by the thought, she hurried on, mounting one slope after another until she reached a point from which she could overlook a long stretch of moor. Alf was in sight. She instantly darted behind the jutting corner of a wood, shrinking with terror from the decision she could no longer postpone.

II.

In the meantime, Alf was walking across the moor slowly and wearily, with bent head and dragging feet, a forlorn, drenched, miserable-looking object. He was in a mood of black depression. He believed that the cup he had just raised to his lips had been dashed aside. He saw nothing before him but a dreary, hopeless struggle amid uncongenial surroundings. It would have been easier to bear had a brighter prospect never tantalised him. He had been haunted all day by a conviction, which no argument he evolved could shake, that the *Sea Queen* was at the bottom of the Atlantic. He was so sure of it that he fully expected to find a telegram announcing the fact waiting for him at the inn. He began to regret that he had not accepted Carson's offer. Even that would have been infinitely better than nothing. As it was, he would have to go back to his dreary work amid lecture-halls, concert-rooms, and police-courts. He seemed to hear the monotonous throbbing of the machinery, to get a whiff of the indescribable smell of a newspaper-office, and his soul turned sick within him. He was physically exhausted, hungry and wet and weary, and, moreover, he had gone away without any matches, and had been unable to soothe himself with a pipe.

He looked so pathetically wretched that Maggie, peering at him through the leaves, felt a sudden pang of pity and stepped promptly forward to meet him. He glanced up, and was instantly transformed. His cheeks flushed and his eyes danced with pleasure.

'Well, Mr Blake, have you had a good catch?' asked Maggie, with a desperate effort to preserve her usual indifferent manner.

'First-rate,' rejoined Alf, swinging his creel round and lifting the lid. It was full to the brim of fine trout.

'You've done real well,' said Maggie. 'There are some grand fish there. But, dear me, you must be wet to the skin.'

'Yes, I'm pretty wet,' he rejoined, with a glance at his dripping clothes. 'But I think there's not much to choose between us. You're nearly as wet as I am, and you've no mackintosh. We must hurry back.'

'Oh, Skye rain hurts nobody,' answered Maggie. 'I just came out for a walk, and I'm not going back yet awhile.'

Alf's face fell.

'You're not coming back yet?' he repeated dolefully.

'No,' she answered petulantly, 'I'm going farther up the hill.'

'Oh,' said Alf disconsolately, 'I thought—I thought'—

Maggie laughed strangely.

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'You thought I'd come to meet you? I wonder what could put that into your head, Mr Blake. But you'd better be moving, or you'll catch your death of cold.'

Alf turned pale and looked away. Then he glanced at her with a pleasant smile.

'Well, I hope you'll enjoy your walk,' he said. 'I do feel rather tired, and so I'll take your advice.'

He plodded drearily on, and she watched him with a curious mingling of pity and irritation. In another moment she was at his side.

'As you're so ready to take advice,' she said, almost rudely, 'I'll give you another piece of it. If any one's for buying the *Sea Queen* from you, you'll tell him you're not such a—such a gowk as you look.'

Alf stared at her in bewilderment.

'What do you mean?' he asked. She thrust the copy of the telegram into his hand.

'That means fortune for you,' said she; 'but it means shame for me. I've no more right to show it to you than I have to pick your pocket, but I couldn't—I couldn't bear—oh, away with you to the inn, and get your clothes dried. I'm for the hill.'

One glance at the telegram was enough. With two strides Alf was up to her and caught her by the hands.

'Maggie,' he exclaimed, and his dripping face shone with delight, 'you did this for me?'

'Ay,' she said, turning aside to hide her swimming eyes and twitching lips. 'And what'll become of me when it all comes out, I daren't think.'

He kept tight hold of her hands, and peered into her face.

'Oh Maggie,' said he; 'Oh Maggie, my dear, do you love me?'

'Love you indeed!' she exclaimed, struggling to free her hands. 'What havers! Away with you to the inn.'

'Not I,' retorted Alf, 'not I. You've got to listen to me, Miss Maggie Mackenzie. I've caught you at last, and every word I've long wanted to say to you, you shall hear before we part. Maggie, my dear, I've loved you since the first minute I saw your bonny face; but till you put that telegram into my hand I was a poor man, and God helping me, I swore I'd never ask you to share the dreary life I've led till now. Besides, I thought—I thought—I was beginning to think that you liked Carson better than me. Now I shall have enough to keep us both; and if you'll be my own dear wife, Maggie, I'll be true and kind to you all the days of my life, and one word from you will make me at this moment the happiest man in all the world. What do you say, Maggie?'

Maggie said nothing, but the light in her eyes made words superfluous. The rain still came washing down, and I suppose two more thoroughly soaked lovers never kissed each other since the days of the Flood.

'Well,' said Maggie mischievously, 'I don't know whether you're the happiest man in all the world, but I'm thinking you're surely the wettest. Down the hill you go this minute, sir, and change your clothes, or—'

She stopped abruptly. There stood Carson, watching them with a look that struck the

smile from their faces. Alf had dropped the telegram when he darted after Maggie, and Carson had picked it up and read it. He had realised the situation at a glance. The fingers that held the telegram quivered, and his face was livid with passion.

'Do you quite understand what this means?' said he, ignoring Alf and addressing Maggie. 'Do you know what is the penalty for disclosing the contents of a telegram? In the eyes of the law you are as much a criminal as if you had stolen my watch or forged my signature. You shall pay for this—do you hear me? You shall pay dearly for this. I will teach you to cross my path and spoil my plans.'

Maggie clung to Alf in a sudden paroxysm of terror, overcome by the sickening sensation of weakness which she had always experienced when her will was opposed to Carson's. Even Alf's presence failed to reassure her. He had always seemed too sensitive and diffident to be anything like a match for a prompt, unscrupulous, imperious man of affairs like Carson.

'What do you mean?' asked Alf quietly.

'What do I mean, curse you!' exclaimed Carson savagely. 'I mean that this girl has rendered herself liable to twelve months' imprisonment for disclosing the contents of a telegram addressed to me.'

'And do you suppose,' continued Alf, speaking more slowly and in a lower tone than usual—'do you for one moment imagine that any judge or jury possessed of the most elementary sense of justice would condemn her for exposing one of the dirtiest and most contemptible frauds that even such a man as you ever perpetrated?'

'Take care!' shouted Carson. 'Mind what you're about!'

'I assure you,' rejoined Alf, 'that I am selecting my expressions with the nicest care. You certainly are precisely the most despicable person I ever met, and I have not the smallest particle of doubt that my opinion of you will be shared by every man and woman in the kingdom, if you are ever imprudent enough to make these proceedings public.'

'Then listen to me,' exclaimed Carson. 'I care not one brass farthing what you or any other fool may think of me, and I swear that I will spare no time or trouble or money to have that girl punished as she deserves, unless—'

He paused.

'Unless?' asked Alf.

'Unless you leave Skye by the *Claymore* tonight, and take a solemn oath that you will never see or speak to her again.'

'There is just one little difficulty in the way,' remarked Alf; 'but I am afraid, I am really afraid, Carson, that it will prevent my adopting your no doubt well-meant suggestion. Maggie has just promised to marry me.'

'She shall not marry you,' cried Carson. 'I tell you she shall not marry you. Now, look here, Blake, you don't understand me. You don't know what I'm capable of. If you drive me past a certain point, I'll stick at nothing—do you hear me?—I'll stick at nothing. You'd better get out of my way before it's too late.'

'To use your own elegant expression,' replied Alf, 'I don't care a brass farthing what you're

capable of; and I understand you perfectly. On the other hand, I am inclined to think that you don't understand me. You seem to be labouring under the delusion that because I decline to soil my hands with your dirty methods of money-making, that I am your mental inferior; and that because I have some consideration for the feelings of others, I must, in the nature of things, be a coward. You are simply a stupid, selfish, coarse-fibred bully; and I assure you I care no more for your bluster than I care for the whistling of the wind in the trees. I will give you a sufficient proof of the value I attach to your threats.—Give me your hand, Maggie.'

Trembling with agitation, Maggie slipped her hand into Alf's, and they walked down the hill. Carson, after a moment's hesitation, following close behind. Maggie little guessed what was in Alf's mind when, still clasping her hand, he marched straight into the kitchen, where Macdonald, two or three fishermen, and the schoolmaster were sitting by the fire, and Mrs Macdonald was baking scones. They looked up in astonishment. Carson stood in the doorway. Alf and Maggie made a curious couple—a pale, slim, pretty girl in a Tam-o'-Shanter, and a dilapidated-looking object in a sou'-wester and an oilskin coat, with a creel at his back and a rod in his hand.

'Mr and Mrs Macdonald, and you two gentlemen,' said Alf coolly, 'I wish you all to take notice that I hereby solemnly declare in your presence, as witnesses, that Margaret Mackenzie is my lawful wedded wife.—Is that true, Maggie? Are you my wife?'

Maggie stared at him with white face and wide startled eyes, too frightened and bewildered to clearly understand what he meant. Then suddenly the truth flashed upon her, a rosy blush coloured her pale cheeks, and with a timid cry she buried her face in her hands.

'Come,' said Alf, 'you must speak, Maggie, and speak out so that every one can hear you. Are you my wife?'

And Maggie, quivering with excitement, cried, 'Yes,' and hid her blushing face behind the grimy old oilskin.

'My conscience!' exclaimed Macdonald.

'Well, that beats everything,' said the schoolmaster.

'They're clean daft,' cried Mrs Macdonald, wiping her hands on her apron, and glowing with delight.

'What's the meaning of this senseless mummery?' exclaimed Carson. 'Do you suppose that a ceremony like that will hold good?'

'Here in Scotland it does!' chuckled Alf. 'Maggie's my lawful wedded wife as certainly as if we'd been married by the Archbishop of Canterbury.'

'It's an infernal lie,' shouted Carson. 'I don't believe it.'

'You may believe it or not,' said Mrs Macdonald wrathfully, 'and it matters not the bone of a herring whether you do or you don't. They're man and wife; that's just the simple truth of it.'

'It's true, Carson,' said Alf. 'You're beaten, my man, and you may as well give in; and you may understand, once for all, that you

may do or say just precisely what you please. Neither I nor my wife care the weight of a straw for your threats.'

Then Carson threw up the sponge. 'Bring me my bill,' he exclaimed savagely. 'I'll not stay another hour in this Heaven-forsaken hole. Bring me my bill, I tell you.'

'I'll do that, Mr Carson,' rejoined Mrs Macdonald, in high displeasure, 'I'll do that gladly; and you'll be a contented man if you're as pleased to go as I am to see the last of you.'

So the bill was made out, and was perhaps none the smaller for Carson's injudicious insolence; and he stalked off to the landing-place, and waited for six hours in the rain for the *Claymore*, which had been detained at Portree, and sailed for Glasgow, breathing threatenings and slaughter, but came to his senses before he reached the Clyde, and ever afterwards kept his mouth discreetly closed.

And Alf raised the pretty blushing face, still hidden against the dingy wet oilskin, and kissed it boldly in the presence of the witnesses.

'I can do that now, Mrs Macdonald, can't I?' said he. 'She's my wife now—isn't she?'

'She is that, sir; but it's not every one that understands the peculiarities of the Scotch marriage laws, and if you'll take my way of it, she'll just be Miss Maggie Mackenzie until you're made man and wife by the minister. Besides, a lassie has just one chance of making a stir in the world, and that's on the day she's married; and Maggie must have her coming and goings o' courtin', and her bridesmaids and her cake, and her bit presents, as well as the best of them.'

'I'll take your advice, Mrs Macdonald,' exclaimed Alf, 'and some of your excellent scones at the same time, and anything else you have handy, for I'm just on the very brink of starvation.'

'The first thing you'll do,' said Maggie, as one having authority, 'is to go and change your clothes, for you're just for all the world like a sponge, and you're fairly standing in a pool of water.'

And Alf showed that he realised the consequences of his new position by meekly obeying.

EVENING.

BEYOND the summit of the far-off hill,
The golden sun has sunk into the west;

No wind disturbs the air of evening still,

The weary world is peaceful and at rest;
One crimson cloud hangs in the upper air,

Like some fair ship, that in a quiet bay
Lies anchored, waiting for the breeze to bear

Her swiftly to strange countries far away.

A bird or two, that have not fall'n asleep,
Still twitter drowsily from bush or tree;

The shadows gradually onward creep,

And darkness, like the dim eternity,
Which men know not, yet dread, envelops all,
Folding the flower-clad earth within her pall.

A. H. MURRAY.

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